

12 April 2006
Wednesday

READINGS

Psalm 74; Lamentations 2:1-9; II Corinthians 1:23-2:11; Mark 12:1-11

DEVOTION

A few years ago I was struck by the number of billboards that had gone up around the U.S. with quotes from God on them. Maybe you've seen them, "Those weren't suggestions, they were commandments.", "What part of thou shalt not don't you understand?", etc. Well, one that particularly caught my eye was the one that said, "Don't make me come down there!". That one seemed to relay the message that we receive in the reading in Lamentations for today. It is a listing of all the things that God will do to a people that rejected him and turned away. It will be the "Day of God's anger", He will hurl down the splendor of Israel, He will forget His footstool. Sounds like a very bad day indeed.

The second passage is almost as bad where Paul is addressing the church in Corinth. He is talking to them about a brother whom they have disciplined. Because of this individual Paul says there is sin in the community and all have been grieved. But here the message begins to take on a different flavor. Paul next says the punishment is sufficient and it is time to now offer comfort and forgiveness and to reaffirm love for the errant brother and that Paul forgives who the church has forgiven in the sight of Christ.

In the third reading we hear the parable of the tenants and the vineyard. Of how the master planted a vineyard and then lent it out and when he sent servants to collect the rent they were abused and some killed. Finally, the master sent his son who was likewise killed and thrown out of the vineyard. In response the master had the tenants killed and the vineyard given to others.

In effect, this is what we see happening in our lives. As sinful fallen people we quake as we realize our sinfulness and how God responds to sin. Then we hear the message of the Gospel which assures us of God's love and forgiveness. And finally we take great comfort in the example of the parable where God has outlined His plan for our salvation: that he sent His Son, Jesus Christ, into the world to die for the sins of all and to offer forgiveness to those who will accept it.

As we continue in this reflective season of Lent may we be mindful of our sinful condition but also aware of the forgiveness that we have through the sacrifice of Christ on the cross.

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